

"Around 30 years ago, a town in Oregon retrofitted an old van, staffed it with young medics and mental health counselors and sent them out to respond to the kinds of 911 calls that wouldn't necessarily require police intervention," published CNN on July 5, 2020, describing a program called CAHOOTS. "Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets" has gained national attention.



A bit about the CAHOOTS program:

- It is run by a community health center, the White Bird Clinic, which provides medical and dental care, and counseling.
- It provides mobile services by mental health paraprofessionals.
- CAHOOTS calls come to Eugene's 911 system or the police non-emergency number.
- Dispatchers are trained to recognize non-violent situations with a behavioral health component and route those calls to CAHOOTS.
- CAHOOTS serves as a first responder for certain mental health crises, homelessness, substance abuse, and threats of suicide.
- The program attributes its success to its partnership with the police department.
- The program pairs a medic, nurse, or EMT with a crisis responder trained in behavioral health.
- The service providers are unarmed.
- The program focuses on a holistic approach, and values client-rapport.
- The program can transport clients to hospitals, shelters or the White Bird Clinic.
- The program can call police or EMS for assistance if the case requires a higher level of care than CAHOOTS can provide.
- It is funded by the city, grants, private donations, and other funding streams.

The CAHOOTS program reports the following:

"The program budget is about \$2.1 million annually, while the combined annual budgets for the Eugene and Springfield police departments are \$90 million. In 2017, the CAHOOTS teams answered 17% of the Eugene Police Department's overall call volume. The program saves the city of Eugene an estimated \$8.5 million in public safety spending annually."

Although CAHOOTS is happy to work with other communities to provide suggestions or templates, the program admits that it is not a one-size-fits-all solution and may not be appropriate for larger or more diverse communities. Additionally, providing immediate services to an individual in crisis does not fill the void in long-term solutions for mental illness or drug addiction.

\*All information provided here was compiled by LAD Staff and can be found at the following links:

<https://whitebirdclinic.org/>

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/05/us/cahoots-replace-police-mental-health-trnd/index.html>